

IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MIND AND LANGUAGE

§ 1

The newborn child is at first no more than an animal. Indeed, it is among the lowest and most helpless of all animals, a mere vegetative lump; assimilation incarnate--wailing. It is for the first day in its life deaf, it squints blindly at the world, its limbs are beyond its control, its hands clutch drowningly at anything whatever that drifts upon this vast sea of being into which it has plunged so amazingly. And imperceptibly, subtly, so subtly that never at any time can we mark with certainty the increment of its coming, there creeps into this soft and claimant little creature a mind, a will, a personality, the beginning of all that is real and spiritual in man. In a little while there are eyes full of interest and clutching hands full of purpose, smiles and frowns, the babbling beginning of expression and affections and aversions. Before the first year is out there is obedience and rebellion, choice and self-control, speech has commenced, and the struggle of the newcomer to stand on his feet in this world of men. The process is unanalyzable; given a certain measure of care and protection, these things come spontaneously; with the merest rough encouragement of things and voices about the child, they are evoked.

But every day the inherent impulse makes a larger demand upon the surroundings of the child, if it is to do its best and fullest.

Obviously, quite apart from physical consequences, the environment of a little child may be good or bad, better or worse for it in a thousand different ways. It may be distracting or over-stimulating, it may evoke and increase fear, it may be drab and dull and depressing, it may be stupefying, it may be misleading and productive of vicious habits of mind. And our business is to find just what is the best possible environment, the one that will give the soundest and fullest growth, not only of body but of intelligence.

Now from the very earliest phase the infant stands in need of a succession of interesting things. At first these are mere vague sense impressions, but in a month or so there is a distinct looking at objects; presently follows reaching and clutching, and soon the little creature is urgent for fresh things to see, handle, hear, fresh experiences of all sorts, fresh combinations of things already known. The newborn mind is soon as hungry as the body. And if a healthy well-fed child cries, it is probably by reason of this unsatisfied hunger, it lacks an interest, it is bored, that dismal vacant suffering that punishes the failure of living things to live fully and completely. As Mr. Charles Booth has pointed out in his *Life and Labour of the People*, it is probable that in this respect the children of the relatively poor are least at a disadvantage. The very poor infant passes its life in the family room, there is a going and coming, and

interesting activity of domestic work on the part of its mother, the preparation of meals, the intermittent presence of the father, the whole gamut of its mother's unsophisticated temper. It is carried into crowded and eventful streets at all hours. It participates in pothouse soirées and assists at the business of shopping. It may not lead a very hygienic life, but it does not lead a dull one. Contrast with its lot that of the lonely child of some woman of fashion, leading its beautifully non-bacterial life in a carefully secluded nursery under the control of a virtuous, punctual, invariable, conscientious rather than emotional nurse. The poor little soul wails as often for events as the slum baby does for nourishment. Into its grey nursery there rushes every day, or every other day, a breathless, preoccupied, excessively dressed, cleverish, many-sided, fundamentally silly, and universally incapable woman, vociferates a little conventional affection, slaps a kiss or so upon her offspring, and goes off again to collect that daily meed of admiration and cheap envy which is the gusto of her world. After that gushing, rustling, incomprehensible passage, the child relapses into the boring care of its bored hireling for another day. The nurse writes her letters, mends her clothes, reads and thinks of the natural interests of her own life, and the child is "good" just in proportion to the extent to which it doesn't "worry."

That, of course, is an extreme case. It assumes a particularly bad mother and a particularly ill-chosen nurse, and what is probably only a transitory phase of sexual debasement. The average nurse of the upper-class child is often a woman of highly developed motherly instincts,

and it is probable that our upper class and our upper middle-class is passing or has already passed through that phase of thought which has made solitary children so common in the last decade or so. The effective contrast must not take us too far. We must remember that all women do not possess the passion for nursing, and that some of those who are defective in this direction may be, for all that, women of exceptional gifts and capacity, and fully capable of offspring. Civilization is based on the organized subdivision of labour, and, as the able lady who writes as "L'amie Inconnue" in the County Gentleman has pointed out in a very helpful criticism of the original version of this paper, it is as absurd to require every woman to be a nursery mother as it is, to require every man to till the soil. We move from homogeneous to heterogeneous conditions, and we must beware of every generalization we make.

For all that, one is inclined to think the ideal average environment should contain the almost constant presence of the mother, for no one is so likely to be continuously various and interesting and untiring as she, and only as an exception, for exceptional mothers and nurses, can we admit the mother-substitute. When we admit her we admit other things. It is entirely on account of such an ideal environment, we must remember, that monogamy finds its practical sanction; it claims to ensure the presiding mother the maximum of security and self-respect. A woman who enjoys the full rights of a wife to maintenance and exclusive attention, without a complete discharge of the duties of motherhood, profits by the imputation of things she has failed to perform. She may

be justified by other things, by an effectual co-operation with her husband in joint labours for example, but she has altered her footing none the less. To secure an ideal environment for children in as many cases as possible is the second of the two great practical ends--the first being sound births, for which the restrictions of sexual morality exist. In addition there is the third almost equally important matter of adult efficiency; we have to adjust affairs, if we can, to secure the maximum of health, sane happiness and vigorous mental and physical activity, and to abolish, as far as possible, passionate broodings, over-stimulated appetites, disease, and destructive indulgence. Apart from these aspects, sexual morality is outside the scope of the New Republican altogether. . . . Do not let this passage be misunderstood. I do not mean that a New Republican ignores sexual morality except on these grounds, but so far as his New Republicanism goes he does, just as a member of the Aeronautical Society, so far as his aeronautical interests go, or as an ecclesiastical architect, so far as his architecture goes.

The ideal environment should, without any doubt at all, centre about a nursery--a clean, airy, brightly lit, brilliantly adorned room, into which there should be a frequent coming and going of things and people; but from the time the child begins to recognize objects and individuals it should be taken for little spells into other rooms and different surroundings. In the homely, convenient, servantless abode over which the able-bodied, capable, skilful, civilized women of the ordinary sort will preside in the future, the child will naturally follow its

mother's morning activities from room to room. Its mother will talk to it, chance visitors will sign to it. There should be a public or private garden available where its perambulator could stand in fine weather; and its promenades should not be too much a matter of routine. To go along a road with some traffic is better for a child than to go along a secluded path between hedges; a street corner is better than a laurel plantation as a pitch for perambulators.

When a child is five or six months old it will have got a certain use and grip with its hands, and it will want to handle and examine and test the properties of as many objects as it can. Gifts begin. There seems scope for a wiser selection in these early gifts. At present it is chiefly woolly animals with bells inside them, woolly balls, and so forth, that reach the baby's hands. There is no reason at all why a child's attention should be so predominantly fixed on wool. These toys are coloured very tastefully, but as Preyer has advanced strong reasons for supposing that the child's discrimination of colours is extremely rudimentary until the second year has begun, these tasteful arrangements are simply an appeal to the parent. Light, dark, yellow, perhaps red and "other colours" seem to constitute the colour system of a very young infant. It is to the parent, too, that the humorous and realistic quality of the animal forms appeal. The parent does the shopping and has to be amused. The parent who ought to have a doll instead of a child is sufficiently abundant in our world to dominate the shops, and there is a vast traffic in facetious baby toys, facetious nursery furniture, "art" cushions and "quaint" baby clothing,

all amazingly delightful things for grown-up people. These things are bought and grouped about the child, the child is taught tricks to complete the picture, and parentage becomes a very amusing afternoon employment. So long as convenience is not sacrificed to the æsthetic needs of the nursery, and so long as common may compete with "art" toys, there is no great harm done, but it is well to understand how irrelevant these things are to the real needs of a child's development.

A child of a year or less has neither knowledge nor imagination to see the point of these animal resemblances--much less to appreciate either quaintness or prettiness. That comes only in the second year. He is much more interested in the crumpling and tearing of paper, in the crumpling of chintz, and in the taking off and replacing of the lid of a little box. I think it would be possible to devise a much more entertaining set of toys for an infant than is at present procurable, but, unhappily, they would not appeal to the intelligence of the average parent. There would be, for example, one or two little boxes of different shapes and substances, with lids to take off and on, one or two rubber things that would bend and twist about and admit of chewing, a ball and a box made of china, a fluffy, flexible thing like a rabbit's tail, with the vertebræ replaced by cane, a velvet-covered ball, a powder puff, and so on. They could all be plainly and vividly coloured with some non-soluble inodorous colour. They would be about on the cot and on the rug where the child was put to kick and crawl. They would have to be too large to swallow, and they would all get pulled and mauled about until they were more or less destroyed. Some would

probably survive for many years as precious treasures, as beloved objects, as powers and symbols in the mysterious secret fetichism of childhood--confidants and sympathetic friends.

§ 2

While the child is engaged with its first toys, and with the collection of rudimentary sense impressions, it is also developing a remarkable variety of noises and babblements from which it will presently disentangle speech. Day by day it will show a stronger and stronger bias to associate definite sounds with definite objects and ideas, a bias so comparatively powerful in the mind of man as to distinguish him from all other living creatures. Other creatures may think, may, in a sort of concrete way, come almost indefinitely near reason (as Professor Lloyd Morgan in his very delightful *Animal Life and Intelligence* has shown); but man alone has in speech the apparatus, the possibility, at any rate, of being a reasoning and reasonable creature. It is, of course, not his only apparatus. Men may think out things with drawings, with little models, with signs and symbols upon paper, but speech is the common way, the high road, the current coin of thought.

With speech humanity begins. With the dawn of speech the child ceases to be an animal we cherish, and crosses the boundary into distinctly human intercourse. There begins in its mind the development of the most

wonderful of all conceivable apparatus, a subtle and intricate keyboard, that will end at last with thirty or forty or fifty thousand keys. This queer, staring, soft little being in its mother's arms is organizing something within itself, beside which the most wonderful orchestra one can imagine is a lump of rude clumsiness. There will come a time when, at the merest touch upon those keys, image will follow image and emotion develop into emotion, when the whole creation, the deeps of space, the minutest beauties of the microscope, cities, armies, passions, splendours, sorrows, will leap out of darkness into the conscious being of thought, when this interwoven net of brief, small sounds will form the centre of a web that will hold together in its threads the universe, the All, visible and invisible, material and immaterial, real and imagined, of a human mind. And if we are to make the best of a child, it is in no way secondary to its physical health and growth that it should acquire a great and thorough command over speech, not merely that it should speak, but, what is far more vital, that it should understand swiftly and subtly things written and said. Indeed, this is more than any physical need. The body is the substance and the implement; the mind, built and compact of language, is the man. All that has gone before, all that we have discussed of sound birth and physical growth and care, is no more than the making ready of the soil for the mind that is to grow therein. As we come to this matter of language, we come a step nearer to the intimate realities of our subject--we come to the mental plant that is to bear the flower and the ripe fruit of the individual life. The next phase of our inquiry, therefore, is to examine how we can get this mental plant, this

foundation substance, this abundant mastered language best developed in the individual, and how far we may go to ensure this best development for all children born into the world.

From the ninth month onward the child begins serious attempts to talk. In order that it may learn to do this as easily as possible, it requires to be surrounded by people speaking one language, and speaking it with a uniform accent. Those who are most in the child's hearing should endeavour to speak--even when they are not addressing the child--deliberately and clearly. All authorities are agreed upon the mischievous effect of what is called "baby talk," the use of an extensive sham vocabulary, a sort of deciduous milk vocabulary that will presently have to be shed again. Froebel and Preyer join hands on this. The child's funny little perversions of speech are really genuine attempts to say the right word, and we simply cause trouble and hamper development if we give back to the seeking mind its own blunders again. When a child wants to indicate milk, it wants to say milk, and not "mooka" or "mik," and when it wants to indicate bed, the needed word is not "bedder" or "bye-bye," but "bed." But we give the little thing no chance to get on in this way until suddenly one day we discover it is "time the child spoke plainly." Preyer has pointed out very instructively the way in which the quite sufficiently difficult matter of the use of I, mine, me, my, you, yours, and your is made still more difficult by those about the child adopting irregularly the experimental idioms it produces. When a child says to its mother, "Me go mome," it is doing its best to speak English, and its remark should

be received without worrying comment; but when a mother says to her child, "Me go mome," she is simply wasting an opportunity of teaching her child its mother-tongue. One sympathizes with her all too readily, one understands the sweetness to her of these soft, infantile mispronunciations; but, indeed, she ought to understand; it is her primary business to know better than her feelings in this affair.

In learning to speak, the children of the more prosperous classes are probably at a considerable advantage when compared with their poorer fellow children. They hear a clearer and more uniform intonation than the blurred, uncertain speech of our commonalty, that has resulted from the reaction of the great synthetic process, of the past century upon dialects. But this natural advantage of the richer child is discounted in one of two ways: in the first place by the mother, in the second by the nurse. The mother in the more prosperous classes is often much more vain and trivial than the lower-class woman; she looks to her children for amusement, and makes them contributors to her "effect," and, by taking up their quaint and pretty mispronunciations, and devising humorous additions to their natural baby talk, she teaches them to be much greater babies than they could ever possibly be themselves. They specialise as charming babies until their mother tires of the pose, and then they are thrust back into the nursery to recover leeway, if they can, under the care of governess or nurse.

The second disadvantage of the upper-class child is the foreign nurse or nursery governess. There is a widely diffused idea that a child is

particularly apt to master and retain languages, and people try and inoculate with French and German as Lord Herbert of Cherbury would have inoculated children with antidotes, for all the ills their flesh was heir to--even, poor little wretches, to an anticipatory regimen for gout. The root error of these attempts to form infantile polyglots is embodied in an unverified quotation from Byron's Beppo, dear to pedagogic writers--

"Wax to receive and marble to retain"

runs the line--which the curious may discover to be a description of the faithful lover, though it has become as firmly associated with the child-mind as has Sterne's "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb" with Holy Writ. And this idea of infantile receptivity and retentiveness is held by an unthinking world, in spite of the universally accessible fact that hardly one of us can remember anything that happened before the age of five, and very little that happened before seven or eight, and that children of five or six, removed into foreign surroundings, will in a year or so--if special measures are not taken--reconstruct their idiom, and absolutely forget every word of their mother-tongue. This foreign nurse comes into the child's world, bringing with her quite weird errors in the quantities, the accent and idiom of the mother-tongue, and greatly increasing the difficulty and delay on the road to thought and speech. And this attempt to acquire a foreign language prematurely at the expense of the mother-tongue, to pick it up cheaply by making the nurse an informal teacher of languages, entirely

ignores a fact upon which I would lay the utmost stress in this paper-- which, indeed, is the gist of this paper--that only a very small minority of English or American people have more than half mastered the splendid heritage of their native speech. To this neglected and most significant limitation the amount of public attention given at present is quite surprisingly small. [Footnote: My friend, Mr. L. Cope Cornford, writes apropos of this, and I think I cannot do better than print what he says as a corrective to my own assertions: "All you say on the importance of letting a child hear good English cleanly accented is admirable; but we think you have perhaps overlooked the importance of ear-training as such, which should begin by the time the child can utter its first attempts at speech. By ear-training I mean the differentiation of sounds--articulate, inarticulate, and musical--fixing the child's attention and causing it to imitate. As every sound requires a particular movement of the vocal apparatus, the child will soon be able to adapt its apparatus unconsciously and to distinguish accurately. And if it does not so learn before the age of five or six, it probably will never do so. By the age of two--or less--the child should be able to imitate exactly any speech-sound. Our youngsters can do so; and, consequently, the fact that they had a nurse with a Sussex accent ceased to matter, because they learned to distinguish her talk from correct English. So in the case of a foreign nurse; the result of a foreigner's influence would be good in this way, that it would train a child to a new series of speech-sounds, thus enlarging its ear capacity. Nor need it necessarily adopt these speech-sounds as those which it should use; it merely knows them; and

if the foreigner have a good accent, and speaks her own tongue well, the child's ear is trained for life, irrespective of expression.

Experience shows that a child can keep separate in its mind two or three languages--at first the speech-sounds, later the expression.

Modes of expression need not begin till after five, or later.

With regard to music, every child should begin to undergo a simple course of ear-training on the sol-fa system as elaborated and taught by McNaught, because the faculty of so learning is lost--atrophied--by the age of twelve or fourteen. But, beginning early--as early as possible--every child, 'musical' or not, can be trained, just as every child, 'artistic' or not, may be taught to draw accurately up to a certain point."]

There can be little or no dispute that the English language in its completeness presents a range too ample and appliances too subtle for the needs of the great majority of those who profess to speak it. I do not refer to the half-civilized and altogether barbaric races who are coming under its sway, but to the people we are breeding of our own race--the barbarians of our streets, our suburban "white niggers," with a thousand a year and the conceit of Imperial destinies. They live in our mother-tongue as some half-civilized invaders might live in a gigantic and splendidly equipped palace. They misuse this, they waste that, they leave whole corridors and wings unexplored, to fall into disuse and decay. I doubt if the ordinary member of the prosperous classes in England has much more than a third of the English language in use, and more than a half in knowledge, and as we go down the social

scale we may come at last to strata having but a tenth part of our full vocabulary, and much of that blurred and vaguely understood. The speech of the Colonist is even poorer than the speech of the home-staying English. In America, just as in Great Britain and her Colonies, there is the same limitation and the same disuse. Partly, of course, this is due to the pettiness of our thought and experience, and so far it can only be remedied by a general intellectual amplification; but partly it is due to the general ignorance of English prevailing throughout the world. It is atrociously taught, and taught by ignorant men. It is atrociously and meanly written. So far as this second cause of sheer ignorance goes, the gaps in knowledge are continually resulting in slang and the addition of needless neologisms to the language. People come upon ideas that they know no English to express, and strike out the new phrase in a fine burst of ignorant discovery. There are Americans in particular who are amazingly apt at this sort of thing. They take an enormous pride in the jargon they are perpetually increasing--they boast of it, they give exhibition performances in it, they seem to regard it as the culminating flower of their continental Republic--as though the Old World had never heard of shoddy. But, indeed, they are in no better case than that unfortunate lady at Earlswood who esteems newspapers stitched with unravelled carpet and trimmed with orange peel, the extreme of human splendour. In truth, their pride is baseless, and this slang of theirs no sort of distinction whatever. Let me assure them that in our heavier way we in this island are just as busy defiling our common inheritance. We can send a team of linguists to America who will murder and misunderstand

the language against any eleven the Americans may select.

Of course there is a natural and necessary growth and development in a living language, a growth that no one may arrest. In appliances, in politics, in science, in philosophical interpretation, there is a perpetual necessity for new words, words to express new ideas and new relationships, words free from ambiguity and encumbering associations. But the neologisms of the street and the saloon rarely supply any occasion of this kind. For the most part they are just the stupid efforts of ignorant men to supply the unnecessary. And side by side with the invention of inferior cheap substitutes for existing words and phrases, and infinitely more serious than that invention, goes on a perpetual misuse and distortion of those that are insufficiently known. These are processes not of growth but of decay--they distort, they render obsolete, and they destroy. The obsolescence and destruction of words and phrases cuts us off from the nobility of our past, from the severed masses of our race overseas, far more effectually than any growth of neologisms. A language may grow--our language must grow--it may be clarified and refined and strengthened, but it need not suffer the fate of an algal filament, and pass constantly into rotteness and decay whenever growth is no longer in progress. That has been the fate of languages in the past because of the feebler organization, the slenderer, slower intercommunication, and, above all, the insufficient records of human communities; but the time has come now--or, at the worst, is rapidly coming--when this will cease to be a fated thing. We may have a far more copious and varied tongue than had Addison or

Spenser--that is no disaster--but there is no reason why we should not keep fast hold of all they had. There is no reason why the whole fine tongue of Elizabethan England should not be at our disposal still. Conceivably Addison would find the rich, allusive English of George Meredith obscure; conceivably we might find a thousand words and phrases of the year 2000 strange and perplexing; but there is no reason why a time should ever come when what has been written well in English since Elizabethan days should no longer be understandable and fine.

The prevailing ignorance of English in the English-speaking communities, enormously hampers the development of the racial consciousness. Except for those who wish to bawl the crudest thoughts, there is no means of reaching the whole mass of these communities to-day. So far as material requirements go it would be possible to fling a thought broadcast like seed over the whole world to-day, it would be possible to get a book into the hands of half the adults of our race. But at the hands and eyes one stops--there is a gap in the brains. Only thoughts that can be expressed in the meanest commonplaces will ever reach the minds of the majority of the English-speaking peoples under present conditions.

A writer who aims to be widely read to-day must perpetually halt, must perpetually hesitate at the words that arise in his mind; he must ask himself how many people will stick at this word altogether or miss the meaning it should carry; he must ransack his memory for a commonplace periphrase, an ingenious rearrangement of the familiar; he must omit or

overaccentuate at every turn. Such simple and necessary words as "obsolescent," "deliquescent," "segregation," for example, must be abandoned by the man who would write down to the general reader; he must use "impertinent" as if it were a synonym for "impudent" and "indecent" as the equivalent of "obscene." And in the face of this wide ignorance of English, seeing how few people can either read or write English with any subtlety, and how disastrously this reacts upon the general development of thought and understanding amidst the English-speaking peoples, it would be preposterous even if the attempt were successful, to complicate the first linguistic struggles of the infant with the beginnings of a second language. But people deal thus lightly with the mother-tongue because they know so little of it that they do not even suspect their own ignorance of its burthen and its powers. They speak a little set of ready-made phrases, they write it scarcely at all, and all they read is the weak and shallow prose of popular fiction and the daily press. That is knowing a language within the meaning of their minds, and such a knowledge a child may very well be left to "pick up" as it may. Side by side with this they will presently set themselves to erect a similar "knowledge" of two or three other languages. One is constantly meeting not only women but men who will solemnly profess to "know" English and Latin, French, German and Italian, perhaps Greek, who are in fact--beyond the limited range of food, clothing, shelter, trade, crude nationalism, social conventions and personal vanity--no better than the deaf and dumb. In spite of the fact that they will sit with books in their hands, visibly reading, turning pages, pencilling comments, in spite of the fact that they will

discuss authors and repeat criticisms, it is as hopeless to express new thoughts to them as it would be to seek for appreciation in the ear of a hippopotamus. Their linguistic instruments are no more capable of contemporary thought than a tin whistle, a xylophone, and a drum are capable of rendering the Eroica Symphony.

In being also ignorant of itself, this wide ignorance of English partakes of all that is most hopeless in ignorance. Except among a few writers and critics, there is little sense of defect in this matter. The common man does not know that his limited vocabulary limits his thoughts. He knows that there are "long words" and rare words in the tongue, but he does not know that this implies the existence of definite meanings beyond his mental range. His poor collection of everyday words, worn-out phrases and battered tropes, constitute what he calls "plain English," and speech beyond these limits he seriously believes to be no more than the back-slang of the educated class, a mere elaboration and darkening of intercourse to secure privacy and distinction. No doubt there is justification enough for his suspicion in the exploits of pretentious and garrulous souls. But it is the superficial justification of a profound and disastrous error. A gap in a man's vocabulary is a hole and tatter in his mind; words he has may indeed be weakly connected or wrongly connected--one may find the whole keyboard jerry-built, for example, in the English-speaking Baboo--but words he has not signify ideas that he has no means of clearly apprehending, they are patches of imperfect mental existence, factors in the total amount of his personal failure to live.

This world-wide ignorance of English, this darkest cloud almost upon the fair future of our confederated peoples, is something more than a passive ignorance. It is active, it is aggressive. In England at any rate, if one talks beyond the range of white-nigger English, one commits a social breach. There are countless "book words" well-bred people never use. A writer with any tenderness for half-forgotten phrases, any disposition to sublimate the mingling of unaccustomed words, runs as grave a risk of organized disregard as if he tampered with the improper. The leaden censures of the Times, for example, await any excursion beyond its own battered circumlocutions. Even nowadays, and when they are veterans, Mr. George Meredith and Mr. Henley get ever and again a screed of abuse from some hot champion of Lower Division Civil Service prose. "Plain English" such a one will call his desideratum, as one might call the viands on a New Cut barrow "plain food." The hostility to the complete language is everywhere. I wonder just how many homes may not be witnessing the self-same scene as I write. Some little child is struggling with the unmanageable treasure of a new-found word, has produced it at last, a nice long word, forthwith to be "laughed out" of such foolish ambitions by its anxious parent. People train their children not to speak English beyond a threadbare minimum, they resent it upon platform and in pulpit, and they avoid it in books. Schoolmasters as a class know little of the language. In none of our schools, not even in the more efficient of our elementary schools, is English adequately taught. And these people expect the South African Dutch to take over their neglected tongue! As

though the poor partial King's English of the British Colonist was one whit better than the Taal! To give them the reality of what English might be: that were a different matter altogether.

These things it is the clear business of our New Republicans to alter. It follows, indeed, but it is in no way secondary to the work of securing sound births and healthy childhoods, that we should secure a vigorous, ample mental basis for the minds born with these bodies. We have to save, to revive this scattered, warped, tarnished and neglected language of ours, if we wish to save the future of our world. We should save not only the world of those who at present speak English, but the world of many kindred and associated peoples who would willingly enter into our synthesis, could we make it wide enough and sane enough and noble enough for their honour.

To expect that so ample a cause as this should find any support among the festering confusion of the old politics is to expect too much. There is no party for the English language anywhere in the world. We have to take this problem as we took our former problem and deal with it as though the old politics, which slough so slowly, were already happily excised. To begin with, we may give our attention to the foundation of this foundation, to the growth of speech in the developing child.

From the first the child should hear a clear and uniform pronunciation about it, a precise and careful idiom and words definitely used. Since

language is to bring people together and not to keep them apart, it would be well if throughout the English-speaking world there could be one accent, one idiom, and one intonation. This there never has been yet, but there is no reason at all why it should not be. There is arising even now a standard of good English to which many dialects and many influences are contributing. From the Highlanders and the Irish, for example, the English of the South are learning the possibilities of the aspirate h and wh, which latter had entirely and the former very largely dropped out of use among them a hundred years ago. The drawling speech of Wessex and New England--for the main features of what people call Yankee intonation are to be found in perfection in the cottages of Hampshire and West Sussex--are being quickened, perhaps from the same sources. The Scotch are acquiring the English use of shall and will, and the confusion of reconstruction is world-wide among our vowels. The German w of Mr. Samuel Weller has been obliterated within the space of a generation or so. There is no reason at all why this natural development of the uniform English of the coming age should not be greatly forwarded by our deliberate efforts, why it should not be possible within a little while to define a standard pronunciation of our tongue. It is a less important issue by far than that of a uniform vocabulary and phraseology, but it is still a very notable need.

We have available now for the first time, in the more highly evolved forms of phonograph and telephone, a means of storing, analyzing, transmitting, and referring to sounds, that should be of very

considerable value in the attempt to render a good and beautiful pronunciation of English uniform throughout the world. It would not be unreasonable to require from all those who are qualifying for the work of education, the reading aloud of long passages in the standard accent. At present there is no requirement of this sort in England, and too often our elementary teachers at any rate, instead of being missionaries of linguistic purity, are centres of diffusion for blurred and vicious perversions of our speech. They must read and recite aloud in their qualifying examinations, it is true, but under no specific prohibition of provincial intonations. In the pulpit and the stage, moreover, we have ready to hand most potent instruments of dissemination, that need nothing but a little sharpening to help greatly towards this end. At the entrance of almost all professions nowadays stands an examination that includes English, and there would be nothing revolutionary in adding to that written paper an oral test in the standard pronunciation. By active exertion to bring these things about the New Republican could do much to secure that every child of our English-speaking people throughout the world would hear in school and church and entertainment the same clear and definite accent. The child's mother and nurse would be helped to acquire almost insensibly a sound and confident pronunciation. No observant man who has lived at all broadly, meeting and talking with people of diverse culture and tradition, but knows how much our intercourse is cumbered by hesitations about quantity and accent, and petty differences of phrase and idiom, and how greatly intonation and accent may warp and limit our sympathy.

And while they are doing this for the general linguistic atmosphere, the New Republicans could also attempt something to reach the children in detail.

By instinct nearly every mother wants to teach. Some teach by instinct, but for the most part there is a need of guidance in their teaching. At present these first and very important phases in education are guided almost entirely by tradition. The necessary singing and talking to very young children is done in imitation of similar singing and talking; it is probably done no better, it may possibly be done much worse, than it was done two hundred years ago. A very great amount of permanent improvement in human affairs might be secured in this direction by the expenditure of a few thousand pounds in the systematic study of the most educational method of dealing with children in the first two or three years of life, and in the intelligent propagation of the knowledge obtained. There exist already, it is true, a number of Child Study Associations, Parents' Unions, and the like, but for the most part these are quite ineffectual talking societies, akin to Browning Societies, Literary and Natural History Societies: they attain a trifling amount of mutual improvement at their best, the members read papers to one another, and a few medical men and schools secure a needed advertisement. They have no organization, no concentration of their energy, and their chief effect seems to be to present an interest in education as if it were a harmless, pointless fad. But if a few men of means and capacity were to organize a committee with adequate funds,

secure the services of specially endowed men for the exhaustive study of developing speech, publish a digested report, and, with the assistance of a good writer or so, produce very cheaply, advertise vigorously, and disseminate widely a small, clearly printed, clearly written book of pithy instructions for mothers and nurses in this matter of early speech they would quite certainly effect a great improvement in the mental foundations of the coming generation. We do not yet appreciate the fact that for the first time in the history of the world there exists a state of society in which almost every nurse and mother reads. It is no longer necessary to rely wholly upon instinct and tradition, therefore, for the early stages of a child's instruction. We can reinforce and organize these things through the printed word.

For example, an important factor in the early stage of speech-teaching is the nursery rhyme. A little child, towards the end of the first year, having accumulated a really very comprehensive selection of sounds and noises by that time, begins to imitate first the associated motions, and then the sounds of various nursery rhymes--"Pat-a-cake," for example. In the book I imagine, there would be, among many other things, a series of little versicles, old and new, in which, to the accompaniment of simple gestures, all the elementary sounds of the language could be easily and agreeably made familiar to the child's ears. [Footnote: Messrs. Heath of Boston, U.S.A., have sent me a book of Nursery Rhymes, arranged by Mr. Charles Welsh, which is certainly the best thing I have seen in this way. It is worthy of note that the

neglect of pedagogic study in Great Britain is forcing the intelligent British parent and teacher to rely more and more upon American publishers for children's books. The work of English writers is often very tasteful and pretty, but of the smallest educational value.]

And the same book I think might well contain a list of foundation things and words and certain elementary forms of expression which the child should become perfectly familiar with in the first three or four years of life. Much of each little child's vocabulary is its personal adventure, and Heaven save us all from system in excess! But I think it would be possible for a subtle psychologist to trace through the easy natural tangle of the personal briar-rose of speech certain necessary strands, that hold the whole growth together and render its later expansion easy and swift and strong. Whatever else the child gets, it must get these fundamental strands well and early if it is to do its best. If they do not develop now their imperfection will cause delay and difficulty later. There are, for example, among these fundamental necessities, idioms to express comparison, to express position in space and time, elementary conceptions of form and colour, of tense and mood, the pronouns and the like. No doubt, in one way or another, most of these forms are acquired by every child, but there is no reason why their acquisition should not be watched with the help of a wisely framed list, and any deficiency deliberately and carefully supplied. It would have to be a wisely framed list, it would demand the utmost effort of the best intelligence, and that is why something more than the tradesman enterprise of publishers is needed in this work. The

publisher's ideal of an author of an educational work is a clever girl in her teens working for pocket-money. What is wanted is a little quintessential book better and cheaper than any publisher, publishing for gain, could possibly produce, a book so good that imitation would be difficult, and so cheap and universally sold that no imitation would be profitable.

Upon this foundation of a sound accent and a basic vocabulary must be built the general fabric of the language. For the most part this must be done in the school. At present in Great Britain a considerable proportion of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses--more particularly those in secondary and private schools--are too ill-educated to do this properly; there is excellent reason for supposing things are very little better in America; and, to begin with, it must be the care of every good New Republican to bring about a better state of things in this most lamentable profession. Until the teacher can read and write, in the fullest sense of these words, it is idle to expect him or her to teach the pupil to do these things. As matters are at present, the attempt is scarcely made. In the elementary and lower secondary schools ill-chosen reading-books are scampered through and abandoned all too soon in favour of more pretentious "subjects," and a certain preposterous nonsense called English Grammar is passed through the pupil--stuff which happily no mind can retain. Little girls and boys of twelve or thirteen, who cannot understand, and never will understand anything but the vulgarest English, and who will never in their lives achieve a properly punctuated letter, are taught such mysteries as that

there are eight--I believe it is eight--sorts of nominative, and that there is (or is not) a gerundive in English, and trained month after month and year after year to perform the oddest operations, a non-analytical analysis, and a ritual called parsing that must be seen to be believed. It is no good mincing the truth about all this sort of thing. These devices are resorted to by the school teachers of the present just as the Rules of Double and Single Alligation and Double Rule of Three, and all the rest of that solemn tomfoolery, were "taught" by the arithmetic teachers in the academies of the eighteenth century, because they are utterly ignorant, and know themselves to be utterly ignorant, of the reality of the subject, and because, therefore, they have to humbug the parent and pass the time by unreal inventions. The case is not a bit better in the higher grade schools. They do not do so much of the bogus teaching of English, but they do nothing whatever in its place.

Now it is little use to goad the members of an ill-trained, ill-treated, ill-organized, poorly respected and much-abused [Footnote: Peccavi.] profession with reproaches for doing what they cannot do, or to clamour for legislation that will give more school time or heavier subsidies to the pretence of teaching what very few people are able to teach. We all know how atrociously English is taught, but proclaiming that will not mend matters a bit, it will only render matters worse by making schoolmasters and schoolmistresses shameless and effortless, unless we also show how well English may be taught. The sane course is to begin by establishing the proper way to do the thing,

to develop a proper method and demonstrate what can be done by that method in a few selected schools, to prepare and render acceptable the necessary class-books, and then to use examination and inspector, grant in aid, training college, lecture, book and pamphlet to spread the sound expedients. We want an English Language Society, of affluent and vigorous people, that will undertake this work. And one chief duty of that society will be to devise, to arrange and select, to print handsomely, to illustrate beautifully and to sell cheaply and vigorously everywhere, a series of reading books, and perhaps of teachers' companions to these reading books, that shall serve as the basis of instruction in Standard English throughout the whole world. These books, as I conceive them, would begin as reading primers, they would progress through a long series of subtly graded stories, passages and extracts until they had given the complete range of our tongue. They would be read from, recited from, quoted in exemplification and imitated by the pupils. Such splendid matter as Henley and Whibley's collection of Elizabethan Prose, for example, might well find a place toward the end of that series of books. There would be an anthology of English lyrics, of all the best short stories in our language, of all the best episodes. From these readers the pupil would pass, still often reading and reciting aloud, to such a series of masterpieces as an efficient English Language Society could force upon every school. At present in English schools a library is an exception rather than a rule, and your clerical head-master on public occasions will cheerfully denounce the "trash" reading, "snippet" reading habits of the age, with that defect lying like a feather on his expert conscience. A school

without an easily accessible library of at least a thousand volumes is really scarcely a school at all--it is a dispensary without bottles, a kitchen without a pantry. For all that, if the inquiring New Republican find two hundred linen-covered volumes of the Eric, or Little by Little type, mean goody-goody thought dressed in its appropriate language, stored away in some damp cupboard of his son's school, and accessible once a week, he may feel assured things are above the average there. My imaginary English Language Society would make it a fundamental duty, firstly to render that library of at least a thousand volumes or so specially cheap and easily procurable, and secondly, by pamphlets and agitation, to render it a compulsory minimum requirement for every grade of school. It is far more important, and it would be far less costly even as things are, than the cheapest sort of chemical laboratory a school could have, and it should cost scarcely more than a school piano.

I know very little of the practical teaching of English, my own very fragmentary knowledge of the more familiar clichés of our tongue was acquired in a haphazard fashion, but I am inclined to think that in addition to much reading aloud and recitation from memory the work of instruction might consist very largely of continually more extensive efforts towards original composition. Paraphrasing is a good exercise, provided that it does not consist in turning good and beautiful English into bad. I do not see why it should not follow the reverse direction. Selected passages of mean, stereotyped, garrulous or inexact prose might very well be rewritten, under the direction of an intelligent

master. Retelling a story that has just been read and discussed, with a change of incident perhaps, would also not be a bad sort of exercise, writing passages in imitation of set passages and the like. Written descriptions of things displayed to a class should also be instructive. Caught at the right age, most little girls, and many little boys I believe, would learn very pleasantly to write simple verse. This they should be encouraged to read aloud. At a later stage the more settled poetic forms, the ballade, the sonnet, the rondeau, for example, should afford a good practice in handling language. Pupils should be encouraged to import fresh words into their work--even if the effect is a little startling at times--they should hunt the dictionary for material. A good book for the upper forms in schools dealing in a really intelligent and instructive way with Latin and Greek, so far as it is necessary to know these languages in order to use and manipulate technical English freely, would, I conceive, be of very great service. It must be a good exercise to write precise definitions of words. Logic also is an integral portion of the study of the mother-tongue.

But to throw out suggestions in this way is an easy task. The educational papers are full of this sort of thing, educational conferences resound with it. What the world is not full of is the capacity to organize these things, to drag them, struggling and clinging to a thousand unanticipated difficulties, from the region of the counsel of perfection to the region of manifest practicability. For that there is needed attention, industry, and an intelligent use of a fair sum of money. We want an industrious committee, and we want one or

two rich men. A series of books, a model course of instruction, has to be planned and made, tried over, criticised, revised and altered. When the right way is no longer indicated by prophetic persons pointing in a mist, but marked out, levelled, mapped and fenced, then the scholastic profession, wherever the English language is spoken, has to be lured and driven along it. The New Republican must make his course cheap, attractive, easy for the teacher and good for the teacher's pocket and reputation. Just as there are plays that, as actors say, "act themselves," so, with a profession that is rarely at its best and often at its worst, and which at its worst consists of remarkably dull young men and remarkably dreary young women, those who want English well taught must see to it that they provide a series of books and instructors that will teach by themselves, whatever the teacher does to prevent them.

Surely this enterprise of text-books and teachers, of standard phonographs and cheaply published classics, is no fantastic impossible dream! So far as money goes--if only money were the one thing needful--a hundred thousand pounds would be a sufficient fund from first to last for all of it. Yet modest as its proportions are, its consequences, were it done by able men throwing their hearts into it, might be of incalculable greatness. By such expedients and efforts as these we might enormously forward the establishment of that foundation of a world-wide spacious language, the foundation upon which there will arise for our children subtler understandings, ampler imaginations, sounder judgments and clearer resolutions, and all that makes at last a

nobler world of men.

But in this discussion of school libraries and the like, we wander a little from our immediate topic of mental beginnings.

§ 3

At the end of the fifth year, as the natural outcome of its instinctive effort to experiment and learn, acting amidst wisely ordered surroundings, the little child should have acquired a certain definite foundation for the educational structure. It should have a vast variety of perceptions stored in its mind, and a vocabulary of three or four thousand words, and among these, and holding them together, there should be certain structural and cardinal ideas. They are ideas that will have been gradually and imperceptibly instilled, and they are necessary as the basis of a sound mental existence. There must be, to begin with, a developing sense and feeling for truth and for duty as something distinct and occasionally conflicting with immediate impulse and desire, and there must be certain clear intellectual elements established already almost impregnably in the mind, certain primary distinctions and classifications. Many children are called stupid, and begin their educational career with needless difficulty through an unsoundness of these fundamental intellectual elements, an unsoundness in no way inherent, but the result of accident and neglect. And a

starting handicap of this sort may go on increasing right through the whole life.

The child at five, unless it is colour blind, should know the range of colours by name, and distinguish them easily, blue and green not excepted; it should be able to distinguish pink from pale red and crimson from scarlet. [Footnote: There could be a set of colour bands in the book that the English Language Society might publish.] Many children through the neglect of those about them do not distinguish these colours until a very much later age. I think also--in spite of the fact that many adults go vague and ignorant on these points--that a child of five may have been taught to distinguish between a square, a circle, an oval, a triangle and an oblong, and to use these words. It is easier to keep hold of ideas with words than without them, and none of these words should be impossible by five. The child should also know familiarly by means of toys, wood blocks and so on, many elementary solid forms. It is matter of regret that in common language we have no easy, convenient words for many of these forms, and instead of being learnt easily and naturally in play, they are left undistinguished, and have to be studied later under circumstances of forbidding technicality. It would be quite easy to teach the child in an incidental way to distinguish cube, cylinder, cone, sphere (or ball), prolate spheroid (which might be called "egg"), oblate spheroid (which might be called "squatty ball"), the pyramid, and various parallelepipeds, as, for example, the square slab, the oblong slab, the brick, and post. He could have these things added to his box of bricks

by degrees, he would build with them and combine them and play with them over and over again, and absorb an intimate knowledge of their properties, just at the age when such knowledge is almost instinctively sought and is most pleasant and easy in its acquisition. These things need not be specially forced upon him. In no way should he be led to emphasize them or give a priggish importance to his knowledge of them. They will come into his toys and play mingled with a thousand other interests, the fortifying powder of clear general ideas, amidst the jam of play.

In addition the child should be able to count, [Footnote: There can be little doubt that many of us were taught to count very badly, and that we were hampered in our arithmetic throughout life by this defect. Counting should be taught by means of small cubes, which the child can arrange and rearrange in groups. It should have at least over a hundred of these cubes--if possible a thousand; they will be useful as toy bricks, and for innumerable purposes. Our civilization is now wedded to a decimal system of counting, and, to begin with, it will be well to teach the child to count up to ten and to stop there for a time. It is suggested by Mrs. Mary Everest Boole that it is very confusing to have distinctive names for eleven and twelve, which the child is apt to class with the single numbers and contrast with the teens, and she proposes at the beginning (*The Cultivation of the Mathematical Imagination*, Colchester: Benham & Co.) to use the words "one-ten," "two-ten," thirteen, fourteen, etc., for the second decade in counting. Her proposal is entirely in harmony with the general drift of the

admirably suggestive diagrams of number order collected by Mr. Francis Gallon. Diagram after diagram displays the same hitch at twelve, the predominance in the mind of an individualized series over quantitatively equal spaces until the twenties are attained. Many diagrams also display the mental scar of the clock face, the early counting is overmuch associated with a dial. One might perhaps head off the establishment of that image, and supply a more serviceable foundation for memories by equipping the nursery with a vertical scale of numbers divided into equal parts up to two or three hundred, with each decade tinted. When the child has learnt to count up to a hundred with cubes, it should be given an abacus, and it should also be encouraged to count and check quantities with all sorts of things, marbles, apples, bricks in a wall, pebbles, spots on dominoes, and so on; taught to play guessing games with marbles in a hand, and the like. The abacus, the hundred square and the thousand cube, will then in all probability become its cardinal numerical memories. Playing cards (without corner indices) and dominoes supply good recognizable arrangements of numbers, and train a child to grasp a number at a glance. The child should not be taught the Arabic numerals until it has counted for a year or more. Experience speaks here. I know one case only too well of a man who learnt his Arabic numerals prematurely, before he had acquired any sound experimental knowledge of numerical quantity, and, as a consequence, his numerical ideas are incurably associated with the peculiarities of the figures. When he hears the word seven he does not really think of seven or seven-ness at all, even now, he thinks of a number rather like four and very unlike six. Then

again, six and nine are mysteriously and unreasonably linked in his mind, and so are three and five. He confuses numbers like sixty-three and sixty-five, and finds it hard to keep seventy-four distinct from forty-seven. Consequently, when it came to the multiplication table, he learnt each table as an arbitrary arrangement of relationships, and with an extraordinary amount of needless labour and punishment. But obviously with cubes or abacus at hand, it would be the easiest thing in the world for a child to construct and learn its own multiplication table whenever the need arose.] it should be capable of some mental and experimental arithmetic, and I am told that a child of five should be able to give the sol-fa names to notes, and sing these names at their proper pitch. Possibly in social intercourse the child will have picked up names for some of the letters of the alphabet, but there is no great hurry for that before five certainly, or even later. There is still a vast amount of things immediately about the child that need to be thoroughly learnt, and a premature attack on letters divides attention from these more appropriate and educational objects. It should, for the reason given in the footnote, be still ignorant of the Arabic numerals. It should be able to handle a pencil and amuse itself with freehand of this sort:--and its mind should be quite uncontaminated by that imbecile drawing upon squared paper by means of which ignorant teachers destroy both the desire and the capacity to sketch in so many little children. Such sketching could be enormously benefited by a really intelligent teacher who would watch the child's efforts, and draw with the child just a little above its level. For example, the teacher might stimulate effort by rejoining to such a

sketch as the above, something in this vein:--

The child will already be a great student of picture-books at five, something of a critic (after the manner of the realistic school), and it will be easy to egg it almost imperceptibly to a level where copying from simple outline illustrations will become possible. About five, a present of some one of the plastic substitutes for modelling clay now sold by educational dealers, plasticine for example, will be a discreet and acceptable present to the child--if not to its nurse.

The child's imagination will also be awake and active at five. He will look out on the world with anthropomorphic (or rather with pædomorphic) eyes. He will be living on a great flat earth--unless some officious person has tried to muddle his wits by telling him the earth is round; amidst trees, animals, men, houses, engines, utensils, that are all capable of being good or naughty, all fond of nice things and hostile to nasty ones, all thumpable and perishable, and all conceivably esurient. And the child should know of Fairy Land. The beautiful fancy of the "Little People," even if you do not give it to him, he will very probably get for himself; they will lurk always just out of reach of his desiring curious eyes, amidst the grass and flowers and behind the wainscot and in the shadows of the bedroom. He will come upon their traces; they will do him little kindnesses. Their affairs should interweave with the affairs of the child's dolls and brick castles and toy furniture. At first the child will scarcely be in a world of sustained stories, but very eager for anecdotes and simple short tales.

This is the hopeful foundation upon which at or about the fifth year the formal education of every child in a really civilized community ought to begin. [Footnote: One may note here, perhaps, the desirability too often disregarded by over-solicitous parents, and particularly by the parents of the solitary children who are now so common, of keeping the child a little out of focus, letting it play by itself whenever it will, never calling attention to it in a manner that awakens it to the fact of an audience, never talking about it in its presence. Solitary children commonly get too much control, they are forced and beguiled upward rather than allowed to grow, their egotism is over-stimulated, and they miss many of the benefits of play and competition. It seems a pity, too, in the case of so many well-to-do people, that having equipped nurseries they should not put them to a fuller use--if in no other way than by admitting foster children. None of this has been very fully analyzed, of course (there are enormous areas of valuable research in these matters waiting for people of intelligence and leisure, or of intelligence and means), but the opinion that solitary children are handicapped by their loneliness is very strong. It is nearly certain that as a rule they make less agreeable boys and girls, but to me at any rate it is not nearly so certain that they make adult failures. It would be interesting to learn just what proportion of solitary children there is on the roll of those who have become great in our world. One thinks of John Ruskin, a particularly fine specimen of the highly focussed single son. Prig perhaps he was, but this world has a certain need of such prigs. A correspondent (a schoolmistress of

experience) who has collected statistics in her own neighbourhood, is strongly of opinion not only that solitary children are below the average, but that all elder children are inferior in quality. I do not believe this, but it would be interesting and valuable if some one could find time for a wide and thorough investigation of this question.]